

Spinal Outreach Team Newsletter

Issue 15, January 2012



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“My goal being a first time parent was to be a ‘hands on’ mum who could care for her independently.”



GOAL!! Whether it's on the sporting field, at work or school, in our hobbies or personal lives, it's rewarding and exciting to achieve a goal. Setting goals for our future is one way in which we motivate ourselves to get things done. Having goals can add purpose and direction to life. Obviously some goals will be quickly and easily achieved whilst others may involve a great deal of preparation, problem solving, effort and even some set backs. Our goals are likely to change over time. A goal we see as a priority today may not matter so much tomorrow and some goals will require a rethink and modification as time passes. Most importantly setting realistic goals and working towards them puts us in charge of the direction of our own lives.

In this edition of the SPOT Newsletter we hear from some people with spinal cord injury who tell us how goal setting has shaped their lives as well as hear about some of SPOT's goals for the year ahead!

If you have ideas for goals you would like to achieve in 2012 and need some advice to make it happen, please contact SPOT and we will see if we can help.

My Greatest Achievement!

On November of 1989, my life was about to change dramatically. I was a typical 13 year old, swimming with friends in my parent's back yard pool, when I had a diving accident. I was diagnosed with incomplete C5/6 quadriplegia. I spent the next 12 months of my life completing an intensive rehabilitation program in the spinal injuries unit.

I really had no idea what a spinal cord injury really meant and how it was going to affect my life, my family, my goals and dreams. Being so young and not really understanding what impact my injury was going to have on my life long term, was in some ways to my advantage. I didn't have many life experiences at 13 so I didn't really have concrete dreams or goals that I needed to achieve until I had my injury.

During rehab you were always encouraged to strive to your best, consistently achieving new goals that were set by the therapists and I, to become as independent as possible. Life from this time forth, was full of challenges but challenges that you can conquer if you put your mind to it!

My achievements since my injury have been Year 12 graduate, completing a Bachelor of Social Work degree, obtaining full time employment as a social worker on the North Qld Spinal Service, driving a modified car, getting married - walking down the aisle on a hopper frame and having a natural birth to our beautiful daughter, Isabella.

My greatest achievement so far has been the birth of our daughter who is now 3yrs old. It was during my pregnancy that we were faced with the challenges of being new parents and setting up an accessible nursery. My goal be-

ing a first time parent was to be a 'hands on' mum who could care for her independently. My husband designed our own accessible cot that would allow me to independently get our daughter in and out, was height adjustable, safe, a practical place to sleep and play, and was remote control operated. The achievement of being able to be a mum who can independently care for my daughter using aids that are accessible to me, allows for special bonding that I have been blessed with.



Richelle and Isabella

My belief is there is life after an injury. Make the most of what you have and focus on your abilities not your disability. Your goals can be endless if you can be patient, creative and understanding, but the outcome needs to be achievable!

Travel to Far Away Places

"I have always loved adventure and dreamt of traveling to remote, exotic places"

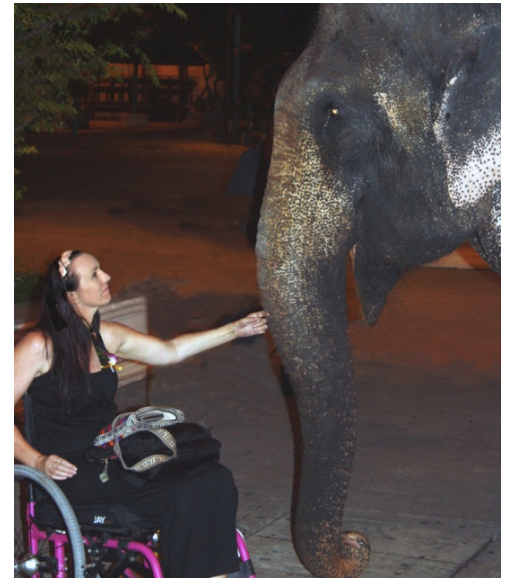
I have always loved adventure and dreamt of traveling to remote, exotic places, but after sustaining a C6 spinal cord injury on a waterslide in December 1990, everything changed... but I still retained my dream.

When my cousin offered to take me to South-East Asia, I was both excited and anxious about all the what-ifs. Together with my daughter, we embarked on an amazing, life-changing journey.

As we traveled through Thailand exploring the sights and smells of exotic foods and alien cultures, I felt a new excitement for life. In the middle of a jungle we visited 'Long Neck' hill tribe villages and got up close and personal with elephants, both humbling experiences. These, along with exploring the infamous 'Golden Triangle' and the Burmese border town of Mae Sai are memories I will never forget.

I didn't think traveling could be more wonderful until we arrived in Cambodia. The awe-inspiring temples of Angkor and the sheer scale of their architecture and artwork were overwhelming. As an artist I was thrilled to see the 1000-year-old carvings and longest 'bas-reliefs' in the world. I was bumped up many 'steep' staircases to reach the top of Angkor Wat...so worth the effort!

We took a riverboat to Tonle Sap Lake, passing through jungle and a traditional stilt house village built on the water. It was a normal sight to see pigs and chickens afloat in bamboo cages.



Jenny, close up and personal with an elephant

This journey was the most incredible experience, made even more special by sharing it with my family. I gained a new confidence. I no longer fret over the things that could go wrong, but rather think of all the fun to be had 'living my dream' discovering the amazing wonders of the world.

If you have a dream, pursue it, because, they can come true!

From Little Things Big Things Grow!

My 43 years of life has been a long journey. I had a parachute accident with the Army in 1993. After surgery, although I could walk, I had to have a morphine pump in me for pain relief. In 2008 I had a tumour found on my spinal cord, after the surgery I became an incomplete paraplegic. I thought life was over and had no idea what to do with the rest of my life.

In September 2010 my daughter and I started swimming to get fit. The first month I lasted about 10 laps each session, 5 with snorkel and 5 without. Then a few weeks later I did 20 laps and by the end of summer I was doing 60 laps of the pool without a mask and snorkel, at 5am and 3pm.



Mark signs his swimming classification papers

While we swam, there was a squad that trained at the same time and by the end of January the squad coach, Paul, asked whether he could coach me. He thought I was a natural at swimming and had noticed how dedicated I was and thought I could do well in competition swimming. Paul was an Australian coach in

2004 and I've trained with him since. We started by setting small goals and will keep setting higher goals until we reach the Australian team.

So far the Army has taught me how to set goals and achieve high standards for myself. For me personally, I want to be in the Paralympics in 2012 and 2016. My goal is to get GOLD in my events.

You can't achieve a goal in one day, it takes months of hard work to get there. You need to break the big goal into small goals. If you want to achieve a goal, you should have it mapped out on paper and write every detail down to help you get there. You need clear concise goals, know when you want to achieve this goal by, know the smaller goals, who can help you and what you need to do to reach it. After achieving small goals it builds your self esteem, you start thinking like a winner and believing in yourself.

Having a spinal injury is a difficult lifestyle to accept but it's not the end of life, it's the beginning of a new one. You can set new goals for life, start to set achievable goals and change your mindset from I'm disabled, I can't do that, to, I'm a person with different abilities and I CAN do it.

In life never look back at the past, what's happened has happened and we can't change it. We can only go forward to change our future. Goal setting is a very powerful technique that can yield strong returns in all areas of your life.

"We started by setting small goals and will keep setting higher goals until we reach the Australian team"

The Power of Technology to Achieve Goals

Up until 2 years ago, if someone had told me I would be living with quadriplegia, I would have thought it a very bad joke. But life is an interesting journey, to say the least.

In 2009 I found myself thrust into the world of spinal injury and the mountain of challenges it presents. At the time of the accident, I thought I had lost everything - in particular, my independence. Unable to move my hands or body below my chest, undertaking the simplest of tasks seemed impossible.

As an occupational therapist and a person with a severe physical limitation, I'm a strong believer in the power of technology in helping people with disability gain back independence and integrate into the community.

One week before I left hospital I was given an iPad & iPhone which changed my life. Rather than rely on others to type for me, turn pages of a book, play music and games...I could now do this myself without a splint or any help. Nowadays, I shop, communicate with friends, even plan my wedding all from my beloved iPad!

My latest project is using the iPad as an Environmental Control Unit to control my TV, lights and front door.

I honestly believe technology is the key for people to master their environment and become a valued contributor to the community. Can't wait to see what the future holds.



Jocelyn and her iPad

Talk to SPOT or Lifetec (www.lifetec.org.au) about how technology may help achieve your goals!

Tips for Achieving Your Goals

1. Break your goals into smaller chunks:

Most goals are abandoned because they are too big and vague.

2. Commit time daily:

The greatest advances are the sum total of a series of small efforts, so do something that moves you closer to accomplishing your goal every day.

3. Talk to yourself:

Turn your most important goal into a one-sentence affirmation, phrased as though you have already accomplished your goal. You need to repeat the affirmation regularly until it becomes your natural way of thinking.

4. Paint yourself into a corner:

Make yourself accountable by telling others of your plans so they become interested in and encourage your progress and check in with you.

5. Write your goals down:

If you write your goals and actions down, you are more committed to the outcome and it is exciting to see your progress as you cross each action and goal off the list when they are completed.

Achieving our Research Goals All Good Things Take Time

The aim of the SPOT research program is to gather information that will help us not only provide a better service to you but to contribute nationally and internationally to what is known about spinal cord injury. Gathering, collating, examining and reporting research which is acceptable for publication, takes a great deal of time. Many of you will recall (or may have participated in) our long term outcomes study. That research commenced way back in 2004! We are pleased to announce that we have written a scientific paper that describes the overall findings of the long term outcomes study, and this is soon to be published in the prestigious journal "Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation".

In a nut shell, the information we collected suggests that people with SCI tend to maintain their level of physical function until a time beyond 25 years post injury, when declines are more likely to be seen. Of course this doesn't mean that when a person with

SCI hits the 25 year mark they will automatically lose function. Nor does it mean that no one under 25 years post injury is experiencing physical problems. It is what we term in research "a significant trend" and should be viewed as a guide for forethought and planning. Another major finding of the study is that secondary conditions such as bladder and bowel dysfunction, fatigue, depression etc become more prevalent after 25 years. Again, forewarned is forearmed, and for many, the consequences of these secondary conditions may be minimised, or even prevented, by awareness and seeking help early.

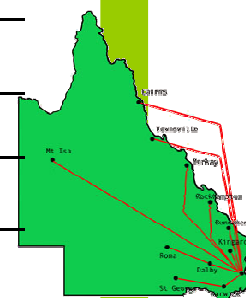
Our next task in achieving our research goals is to analyse information we have regarding use of GP services by people with SCI. We want to see how this compares with overall population data so we can make future recommendations about the primary health care needs of people with SCI in Queensland.

If you would like to receive information electronically from SPOT
email: spot@health.qld.gov.au and request to be added to the SPOT email list

REGIONAL VISITS 2012

We have added two new visit areas and changed the order slightly, so check out this year's schedule for when we will be in your area.

Area	Week Of
Roma, Dalby and West	30 th January, 2012
Toowoomba & Pittsworth	13 th February, 2012
Mackay (South to Sarina & North to Bowen)	5 th March, 2012
Rockhampton & West, Emerald & Dysart	26 th March, 2012
Cairns & northern regions (incl. Cape)	30 th April, 2012
Bundaberg & Monto	14 th May, 2012
Townsville, Mt Isa (incl. Palm Island)	4 th June, 2012
Longreach, Winton & surrounding region	18 th June, 2012
Stanthorpe, Warwick and West	16 th July, 2012
Kingaroy, Murgon, Gayndah & Mundubbera	30 th July, 2012
Cairns & South to Cardwell (Tully and Mt Garnet)	20 th August, 2012
Nambour & north of Nambour to Gympie	10 th September, 2012
Gladstone, Biloela, Theodore and Bundaberg	15 th October, 2012
Hervey Bay and Maryborough	19 th November, 2012



Service Provider Education 2012

This year's short format videoconferences will be supported by online resources that will be added to the QSCIS Web page throughout 2012. Check the website regularly for dates and times for the videoconferences.

Posture and seating. Part 1: the nuts and bolts	in March 2012
Wound care in the community setting	in June 2012
Shower chair seats: Features and options	in September 2012
Supporting clients to manage change and set goals	in November 2012

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